KATHERINE TINGLEY:

THEOSOPHIST AND HUMANITARIAN

By

Lilian Whiting

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By Katherine Tingley

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THE LEADERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

H. P. Blavatsky

Katherine Tingley

William Q. Judge

KATHERINE TINGLEY: THEOSOPHIST AND HUMANITARIAN

SO much has been written of the early life of Katherine Tingley that it is hardly necessary to present here more than the briefest outline of the outward events. It is the Madame Tingley of the present moment with whom we are chiefly concerned. A pamphlet is not the British Encyclopaedia, in which space permits the general history of everything from the creation down. She is a daughter of New England and one of whom her native Puritan country may well be proud. Her father demonstrated his patriotism as an officer in the Civil War. One of her ancestors, Stukely Westcott, was, with Roger Williams, one of the founders of Providence, and was banished from the town of Old Salem on account of his liberal views in matters of religion. He was on Governor Arnold's staff and a member of the General Council until he was eighty-three years of age, and the Governor married Stukely Westcott's eldest daughter. Madame Tingley's forebear, with other advanced thinkers of his time, was imprisoned in Boston because of his so-called heresy!

Numberless incidents of her childhood reveal stirring in the little one the same ardent impulses for the betterment of life that have so signally manifested themselves in the creative activities of her womanhood. One of these incidents I heard related from Madame Tingley's own lips. "When

I was a very small child," she said, "my father, who was an officer in the Civil War, took his family to live near the camp where his regiment was stationed, and I was the witness of many strange and interesting incidents connected with the War. I can remember distinctly, as though it were yesterday, seeing President Lincoln and his staff reviewing the troops of the Army of the Potomac. I well remember also hearing the cannonading of the second battle of Bull Run, and seeing the Confederate prisoners being led along the road by the Union soldiers on their way to the old Capital Prison in Washington. I recall clearly my father discovering me at midnight with my negro nurse among the soldiers, who had come up from the great battle before Richmond. These had bivouacked on the road, worn out with exhaustion. In my desire to aid the tired and sick and a few slightly wounded soldiers, I had persuaded the nurse to bring baskets full of all sorts of food to them. I was so desirous of relieving the wounded soldiers that I helped myself to some of my father's best handkerchiefs to use for bandages to bind up their wounds, and started out to do my first work as a nurse. I tried to croon some of the most tired to sleep with old Irish songs, which a former nurse had taught me. But my distress and embarrassment came when my father, with a stern and commanding voice, picked me up in his arms and carried me home. And after receiving a long sermon on the impropriety of my conduct, I went to sleep in tears, and I never saw my poor patients again. The impression of all this and many other incidents connected with that period of my life has seemed to be indelible."

Katherine Tingley's first experience as a worker for humanity was among prisoners behind the bars, and in rendering practical assistance to the poor in the East Side tenement district of New York City. It was at a period of suffering

CENTRAL GROUP OF BUILDINGS, INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA

MME KATHERINE TINGLEY AT DARJÎLING, INDIA, GOING TO MEET ONE OF THE TEACHERS OF MME. BLAVATSKY, FOUNDRESS OF THE MODERN THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

resulting from strikes, when families went for days without bread, holding out in their starving condition for what they considered a principle of justice to which they sacrificed all other possibilities. She organized a non-sectarian Relief Society, and established a 'Do-Good Mission' in the heart of the destitution. Yet she often felt, she declares, that even when she was doing her utmost to lessen the suffering in the district where she used to work, she might be "encouraging pauperism" — she, whose idea for years had been that the only way to help the poor was to teach them to help themselves.

"There was, even then," Madame Tingley tells me, "a half-formulated plan in my mind of the establishment of an institution somewhere away from the life of cities, where these people might be taught practical handicrafts; be in-

structed as to the simple duties and responsibilities of life; even be brought toward happiness. I realized that if the children were to escape the limitations in which they were born and which their parents were enduring, new opportunities must be provided; entirely different surroundings must be given them.

"I found the gnawing fear of death to be a nightmare among them. As I had never myself felt that fear, I knew I could help them. I organized a non-sectarian Sunday School for the children; and a few noble workers who co-operated with me made possible for the little ones many helpful and happy hours. The plan extended itself to classes for the parents on Sunday mornings; and how gratified I was when some of the fathers came, who had heretofore passed Sunday mornings in sleeping off the effects of dissipation!"

Such were the circumstances in which Madame Katherine Tingley first met William Q. Judge. He learned of the work she was doing among the destitute and went to investigate. Thus was the link forged that united her to the Theosophical Society. But the ideals and ideas of Theosophy did not seem new. She says that she cannot remember the time, since she first began to think seriously, when the truths of Theosophy were not familiar to her, though she had never called them by name. In Theosophy she found some of her own ideas formulated. "The optimism of the Theosophical philosophy established in my mind a superb foundation for the broadest humanitarian work," Madame Tingley now says in looking back upon those days. For she does not conceive of Theosophy as a fantastic medley, whose aim is the development of psychic faculties, or the promulgation of uncanny doctrines; but as a philosophy of life, offering an interpretation and a remedy for the world's unrest, its suffering and its heartache. "My aim," she says, "is to bring home to the

mind what humanity most needs today: a new optimism, a hope of such an inspiring character that all must feel the touch of something higher, and a new strength because of the possibilities that lie before us."

Mr. Judge died in March of 1896. With his unerring power of reading character, he had chosen and appointed Katherine Tingley as his Successor. Obedient to the intuitive longing that had characterized her from her earliest youth, she accepted the noble trust and became the Leader of the Theosophical Movement throughout the world.

Of Mr. Judge, Madame Tingley speaks with the utmost devotion. "One felt him," she remarked to me, "to be not only wise but noble — his whole life gladly given to the promulgation of the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion. He had already made Theosophy a living power in his life, ever tolerant and compassionate even to his most bitter enemies. His far-reaching plans for benefiting humanity through the teachings of Theosophy inspired me." There are one or two other societies that 'flock by themselves' under their respective leaderships; but with those we are not concerned. "With malice toward none," as the martyred Lincoln immortally said, this original Movement founded by Madame Blavatsky in New York City in 1875, proceeds under Madame Tingley's direction in its exemplification of pure Theosophy, unencumbered and unimpeded by the barnacles of false or fantastic assumptions.

"Onward the chariot of the Untarrying moves,
Nor day divulges it, nor night conceals."

'Theosophists' (so-called), may mistake, misrepresent, or distort. This has no effect on Theosophy. "The solar system has no anxiety about its reputation," observed Emerson; and Theosophy need have as little. Truth can no more be

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INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, POINT LOMA, FROM A POINT NEAR THE MAIN ENTRANCE

dislodged than can a star from the firmament. These three successive Leaders — Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, William Quan Judge, and Katherine Tingley—regard Theosophy as the clarion call to benefit mankind. To this end there must be the utmost purity of mind and thought; the constant study of the spiritual nature of man and of the Universe; the unceasing endeavor to live the life of Brotherhood. Theosophy has anticipated the great industrial and economic demand of today.

ENTRANCE TO THE RIDDERSAAL, THE HAGUE, HOLLAND

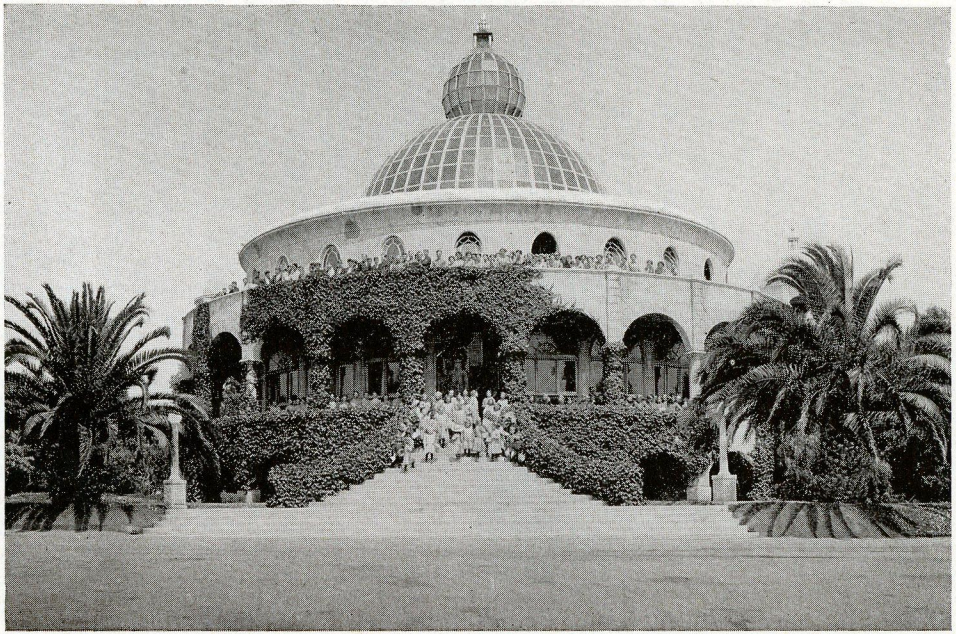
Râja-Yoga Students who accompanied Madame Tingley on her European tour, 1913, after singing at the opening session of the XXth World Peace Congress at The Hague. In the center is the late Professor Daniel de Lange, Founder-Director of the Amsterdam Conservatory of Music; afterwards Director of the Isis Conservatory of Music, at Point Loma, California.

Katherine Tingley has certainly overcome barriers of time, time, place, and circumstance. She has redeemed Theosophy from a misunderstood or imperfectly understood and much-maligned philosophy to a science of life, revealing the lofty and practical possibilities of living the life of Brotherhood. Under her magical leadership the Theosophical Society has become the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society;

its expansion having endowed the organization with new life; her official and gladly-recognised guidance having trebled the membership even in the first year of her administration; and the numerical increase in these twenty-one years that have since elapsed is only comparable with the unusual personal quality of a large proportion of this increase.

We are led by a way that we know not. For twenty-five years Theosophy, introduced to the Western World by Madame Blavatsky in New York City in 1875, its promulgation nobly continued by her immediate Successor, William Q. Judge, now being developed in larger ways by the labors of his Successor, Katherine Tingley,— this Theosophy had been throwing its rays like a candle set in a dark place. Its theories, its propositions, were fairly familiar to the intelligent public. They were variously regarded as of speculative intellectual interest, as matters of significant study along scholarly lines for the luxury of leisure hours, as theories indeed that undoubtedly contained the germs of valuable truth that sometime and somewhere the humanity of some Golden Age, yet to dawn, might not unprofitably apply to the very business of living. That these higher principles, quite largely recognised as ideals, might be incorporated into human society in some as yet undiscerned future, the more advanced thinkers held as quite possible and even quite to be desired. Meantime we had to deal with commercial and industrial unrest, with the great problem of getting a living rather than with living itself; with multitudes of the 'practical' affairs of life. The Sermon on the Mount was fully recognised as offering lofty and noble ideals, and we generally held it in deepest respect,— but yet, but yet,— well, its Giver had not been beset by the immediate problems of the Twentieth Century.

We Americans are a race of idealists. However com-



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THE TEMPLE OF PEACE, POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA

mercialized or materialized we may become in varying degrees, we never wholly lose sight of our ideals. They are something like the Constitution of the United States, which, while we may not be precisely familiar with all its details, we take for granted as a worthy cornerstone of political existence. Columbus was a seer and idealist; the Puritan Fathers were idealists; John Harvard, the young clergyman who left his meager estate to found the great University that bears his name, was an idealist. New England was founded and nurtured on ideals. What wonder then that this daughter of the Puritans, this inheritor of the lofty traditions of New England, should be the woman predestined by the evolutionary forces to recognise and to crystallize into applied practicability the ideals presented by Theosophy! For the moral ideals are implanted in Humanity by the education of the growing manhood and womanhood. Now idealism is not synonymous with the conditions of a vagabond or of the worthless hanger-on of society. True idealism is moral integrity and intellectual activity. The true idealist acts as a responsible being in all his relations. True idealism is indeed the constructive force of human progress.

For twenty-five years then, just preceding the dawn of the Twentieth Century, these Theosophical ideals had been in the air, so to speak. People were gradually becoming familiarized with them. At this date, 1900, Katherine Tingley established the International Theosophical Headquarters at Point Loma, California, designed to incorporate these ideals and transmute them into a working power in the everyday life of the world.

The Pilgrim Fathers had little or no glimmering knowledge of Theosophy, but they were of that immortal band who were not disobedient unto the Heavenly Vision. They played their part in their time. Three hundred years later there

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SOME OF THE BOYS' BUNGALOW HOMES,
RÂJA-YOGA SCHOOL, FOUNDED BY KATHERINE TINGLEY IN 1900

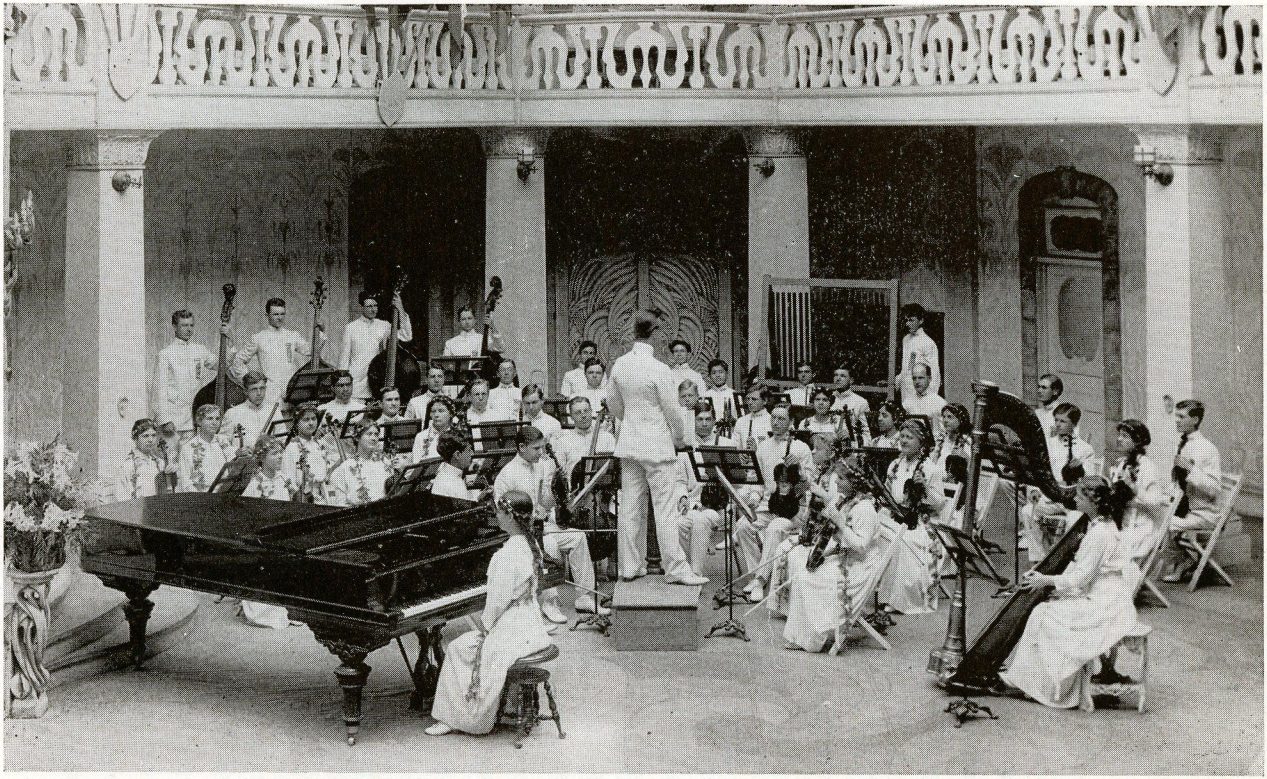
comes another time. All progress is simply the endless chain of definite and evolutionary sequences.

"From one stage of our being to the next
We pass unconscious o'er a slender bridge";

we find ourselves on the other side moving on, still moving on. Katherine Tingley seized the Fortunate Moment. In 1900 she took up her permanent residence on the hills of Point Loma, where, under her direction, the wild region of sage-brush and chaparral has been transformed into this garden of ineffable loveliness, for she saw that the practical and the all-pervading value of Theosophical ideas and ideals was something to be incorporated into human life. "Theosophist is, who Theosophy does," declared Madame H. P. Blavatsky.

Katherine Tingley is a born Teacher and Humanitarian, a compact of sincerity, simplicity, and an all-pervading sympathy that includes a wonderful largeness of comprehension. In her own life she has had her share of sorrow and suffering; in her great and varied humanitarian work she has come in contact with the unfortunates of all classes; she has worked to better the conditions of the utterly destitute; she has worked to bring hope and uplift to the 'shut-ins' behind the bars. A mingled French strain in her ancestry has imparted, it may be, something of that power of enthusiasm that is in her nature, and that manifests itself in her intense love for Victor Hugo and Mazzini.

She believes in Reincarnation, but says she is not informing a waiting world that she once figured as Marie Antoinette or the Queen of Sheba, or that she remembers close associations with old friends on the Moon or the Planet Mars! After all, what is Reincarnation? Simply the belief that the spiritual man, the immortal being, wears out and successively discards many physical bodies on his pilgrimage, even as we wear out



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RÂJA-YOGA ORCHESTRA, INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA

and discard our garments and our clothing. The change we call death is simply the withdrawal of the real man from his physical body, which has been his instrument of expression; which has served as the mechanism, so to speak, in order that he might relate himself to the physical universe during his temporary sojourn on earth. Surely there is nothing particularly startling or incredible in this theory that the spiritual man makes use of successive physical bodies in the gaining of his experience and his discipline on earth, any more than that we make use of many successive relays of clothing. The analogy is easy.

Madame Tingley believes in Karma. Who does not, when he realizes that the term signifies merely the law relating cause to effect, and effect to cause: "As ye sow, so must ye also reap"? Thus the Apostle defines Karma. The Leader of the World Theosophical Movement, the Successor of Madame Blavatsky and William Quan Judge, instructs her students to assist those who by error and ignorance have made 'bad Karma,' who have brought upon themselves unfortunate conditions; she leads her students to help themselves and others to overcome and better these conditions. Surely there is nothing uncanny in this.

She teaches that man is essentially divine, yet dual in his life on earth, possessing two selves: one, the higher, immortal, divine, his true self; the other, animal, passionate, selfish, which must be brought under control and conquered. She teaches human perfectibility, and that all life is under the governance of law. To the most despairing and unfortunate she proclaims 'another chance.'

"According to your teaching," I remarked, after listening to a brief exposition of Reincarnation and Karma, "Theosophy embodies the deepest significance to our moral life. But how is it more especially concerned with this result than are the

NATURE SETTING OF THE GREEK THEATER
POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA

general moral ideals? Your presentation of Theosophy of course involves new and grand aspects. I think it has suffered from the strangely absurd and fantastic entanglements that have been put forward by certain so-called 'Theosophists,' — people for instance whose phenomenal memory assures them that they are the reincarnation of Plato, of Alexander the Great, or Napoleon, or Queen Dido, or Joan of Arc, or somebody or other,— always apparently of some high and mighty personality."

Madame Tingley laughed. "Oh, well," she returned, "all that is negligible. Law is no less honorable because chicanery is sometimes practised; nor medicine, because there are quacks in the world."

All her teachings are pervaded by common sense; she deals neither with the fantastic nor with the 'fads' of life.

GLIMPSE OF THE PACIFIC THROUGH STOA IN THE GREEK THEATER

She pays tribute not only to her predecessors, Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Judge, but to all the great Teachers of the past.

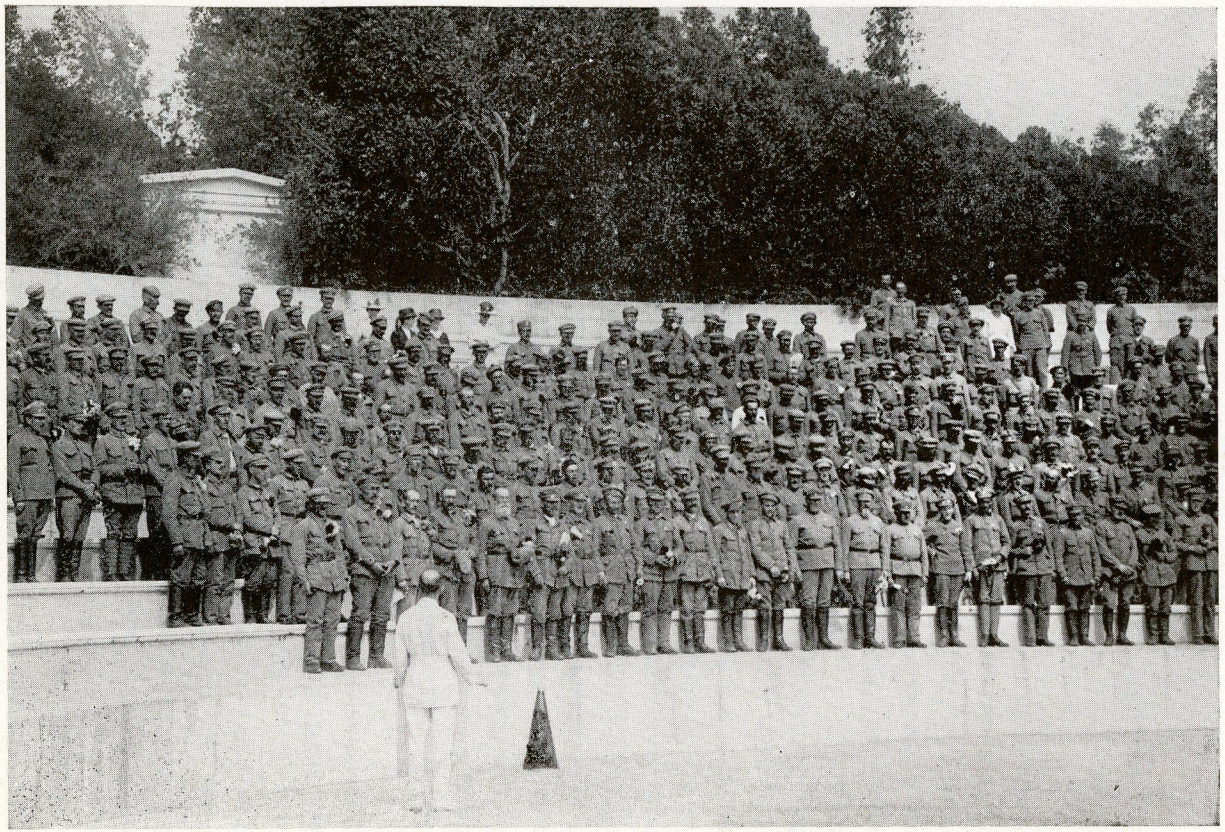
"If you would understand your Bible better, your Christ better, your God better," says Madame Tingley, "study Theosophy conscientiously." For one, I believe that all who study Theosophy intelligently will share her conviction. I am not myself a Theosophist in outward membership; I was born and bred, christened and confirmed, in the Episcopal Church, and I also remain a communicant of Trinity Parish in Boston, which is still invested with the great name of Phillips Brooks; but I have long earnestly felt that it is to Theosophy that we must look for the more rational explanation of the origin, the development, and the destiny of the soul. Theosophy and Christianity supplement each other to a

degree greater than would be quite believed by anyone, until he discovers it by his own study. And it is to Madame Tingley's reverent inculcation of this truth that I was indebted for being at once impressed by her presentation of Theosophy. "We believe," she says, "that man is divine; that he is a part of the great Universal Life, and that as he lives close to those teachings that Jesus, the Initiate, presented to us, he is, in the truest sense, a Christian and a Theosophist."

In her public lectures in this country and in Europe, Madame Tingley has made stirring and eloquent appeals for the abolition of Capital Punishment — "legalized murder," as she calls it. "I find nothing in the teachings of Jesus to warrant such a practice," she says. Her aim to make the moral and spiritual life a living power in the lives of men is one that is ardently recognised, for her appeal is not to the emotional, that might arouse compassion but could not command intellectual respect. "If we are to discuss the abolition of Capital Punishment," Madame Tingley has said, "we must be prepared to state what remedy to apply in its stead, not asking for the freedom of the prisoners; not presuming to interfere with law and justice in our country, but declaring and demanding that every man and woman shall have their spiritual rights.

"If we are to stem the tide of vice and degradation, we must treat these unfortunates as souls; not intimidate them, not arouse their lower natures, not create a larger revenge, more passion, more hate for the world and the laws of men; but we must change these conditions through our own spiritual efforts."

The Theosophical Leader's humanitarian work has included much of this special work for prisoners and criminals. She has thought deeply upon the subject in all its bearings. She is too familiar with law, too alive to justice, to view this



ČECHOSLOVAKS ENTERTAINED IN GREEK THEATER, INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA, JULY 8, 1919

problem from any merely sentimental aspect. Questioning her as to what has been revealed in her long contemplation and study of this problem, she replied:

"I know, largely from my association with those whom the world calls criminals, in trying to help them, that we can never restore society to its dignity or the unfortunate man to his true position until we have reached that point of spiritual attainment where we shall know right from wrong, and have the courage to work for justice in consonance with the Higher Law; to sustain it and to see that only those laws are enacted which are for the betterment of humankind.

"When I say betterment, I include something more than the physical life or our worldly interests, our society aims, or our pride. In my opinion, we must arouse the whole world to see that savagery is allied with Capital Punishment. Think what we should feel if our children were in prison today or were to be executed tomorrow. This is the way to get home to the truth. The only way is to bring the sorrows of others into our own lives and thus feel and understand them."

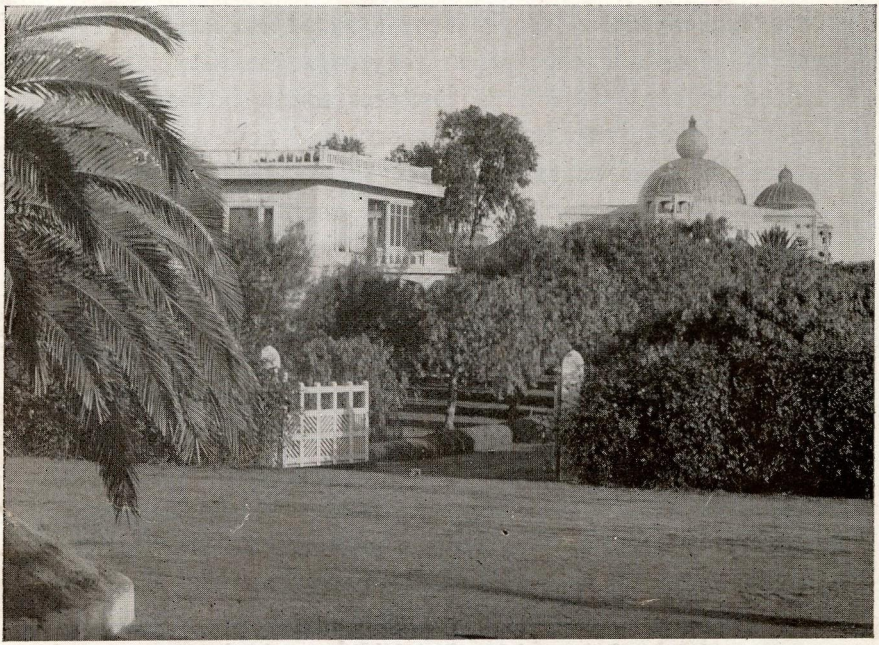
"Then you would answer in the affirmative the old question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' "

"I would indeed," replied Madame Tingley, with earnestness. "It is the duty of us all," she continued, "to realize our human responsibility. When that power comes, that knowledge, that love, that compassion, which the Nazarene and others taught ages ago,— when that comes, there can be no questioning. Yes, I have said it over and over again, and the words sing themselves into my heart like a beautiful mantram, 'I am my brother's keeper.' "

"I understand that you regard crime as a disease, a deformity, a distortion,— something to be restrained and placed under curative and corrective influences."

"Why, certainly. I have declared this to be my firm belief in many of my public lectures here and in Europe," she returned. "These unfortunates should be placed in institutions appropriate for the restoration of mind and body to a normal state, and cared for in such a way that they would understand that they were under certain remedial restraint, that they would feel they were in a moral hospital, if I may call it so; or in a school where they would be instructed and helped so that their better natures might be aroused to strength, stimulated by recognition; and however long the process, it would tell in the end."

All this reveals impressively the degree in which Theosophy, in Katherine Tingley's conception, is not only interwoven with man's daily life, but also that the principles of the Wisdom-Religion are the very foundation of life. The besetting sin of selfishness and selfish personal ambitions must be absolutely cast out. This is the initial condition of usefulness and of happiness. Counterfeit 'Theosophy,' as not infrequently presented in fantastic and meaningless jargon by certain pseudo-Theosophists, is thus seen to bear no likeness to this lofty ideal with which the Leader of the Theosophical Movement throughout the world identifies the true; for this ideal is that of the Higher Morality, the most potent aid in the supreme work of the spiritual unfolding and advancement of man; of that unceasing effort for the uplift of human life, which is its own reward and its own ever-renewing energy.



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GLIMPSE OF KATHERINE TINGLEY'S RESIDENCE,
INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL HEADQUARTERS, POINT LOMA, CALIFORNIA